



**Program:**

Paid Advertising - Agency of Record

**Services Used:**

Analytics, Strategic Planning, Display, Search

**Challenge**

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) made a bold decision a few years back to abandon direct mail prospecting and re-focus its efforts on acquiring donors primarily through digital channels. When Further began serving paid advertising for IRC shortly thereafter, it was essentially a blank slate with aggressive goals, inferior technology and reporting capabilities, unproven channels, tactics and messaging, and an internal team that was supportive, realistic, and innovative but understaffed.

The objective was clear...create a profitable, growing revenue stream that leaned heavily on paid media and email, and would form the basis for the majority of new donors acquired over the next decade or more.

**Strategy**

Further began by counseling IRC of the need to carve out a unique space in the market and to 'own' a distinct part of the international relief market. In 2014 and 2015 we recommended they position themselves to 'own' the refugee space.

This proved insightful and immensely valuable because in late 2015 and 2016 the European Refugee Crisis emerged in the news. IRC was ready to build on early learnings and "build the plane while flying".

Through a combination of evergreen campaigns and harnessing media moments, the last three years have witnessed hundreds of thousands of new donors to the organization.

An initial challenge was revamping legacy reporting systems (and subsequently a migration to Salesforce) to be able to track new donor spend and revenue in real-time. Large investments were being made with the goal of acquiring new donors but categorizing online ad efforts as “new” or “existing” requires more engineering than more easily attributable channels like mail or phone.

Like many organizations, IRC was bucketing its performance as “online advertising” without tracking acquisition and renewal separately, so it couldn’t be sure if it was efficiently targeting, messaging and converting new donors.

Further helped IRC reorganize its advertising accounts so that all targeting and spend was deployed and attributed as new or existing. We were then able to develop, test and optimize messaging tailored for new prospects (as well as existing donors) and report on acquisition progress, both in terms of volume and pre-determined CPA thresholds. Because of the great need and opportunity for fundraising that the news cycle provided, the KPIs were evaluated on a daily and sometimes hourly basis, helping IRC know in real-time whether efforts should be throttled up or pulled back.

## **Results**

- A short three years later, IRC is one of the largest and most successful digital fundraisers
- New donors increased 142% from FY16 to FY17 while new donor CPA rose only 14%
- Acknowledging the escalation of the refugee crisis, Syrian war, and U.S. political turmoil that assisted our strategy during FY17, the IRC has been able to continue to refine successful tactics, pursue innovation, and maintain impressive growth in FY18. Digital efforts in FY18 returned 46% more new donors than FY16 when the refugee crisis was front and center in the media
- Concurrent with the new donors success, retention revenue is also at historic highs